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Khilafat Movement in Sub-Continent: A Shade of Pan-Islamism

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Abstract

Since the early days of Islam, the institution of Khilafat evolved during the period of the four pious Caliphs and was culminated with the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire by the British leading to its abolition in 1924. The institution came to symbolise the political, extra-territorial and spiritual unity among the Muslims what the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had emphasised on to foster the emotive feelings of a world community among them. Many of the Indian Muslim rulers, except the Mughals, used to obtain investiture from the Ottoman Caliph to legitimise their rule in the eyes of their Muslim subjects. The research has attempted to prove that the Khilafat Movement in India was also the shade of this Pan-Islamic sentiment fostered among the Muslim community by the institution of Khilafat. The Movement brought home important historical and political lessons and a strong sense of Muslim identity in their future struggle against the British imperialism and for a separate homeland of their own.

Keywords: Khilafat Movement, Sub-Continent, the Muslims, Turkey, Pan-Islamism.

Introduction

The concept of Khilafah is an aspect of Islamic political thought which has been an extensive topic of discussion within Muslim society. Most of the Muslim scholars have referred to the divine source (Quran), *Hadith* and many other relevant sources to prove the fundamental need for Khalifah in the Ummah (Fadzli Bin Adam, 2001, p. 02). Al-Aahkam and Al-Sultaniyyah of Al-Mawardi and Nasihat al-Muluk of Ghazali are the major contributions to the debate. Muhammad Rashid Rida, Ali Abd al-Raziq and Abul Ala Maududi are prominent authorities in this context (Fadzli Bin Adam, 2001, p. 02). the works of the mentioned scholars reflect that the institution of Khilafat has great importance in the Islamic political system that began in AD 632 with the election of Hazrat Abu Bakr (RA) as the successor of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). He was followed by Hazrat Umar (RA), Hazrat Usman (RA) and Hazrat Ali (RA) and the four of them are collectively known as *Khulfa-i-Rashideen*. Most probably, a Caliph was a temporal and spiritual head of the Muslims and was responsible to devise policies in strict conformity with the injunctions of divine book (the Holy Quran) and *Sunnah* and sometimes through Ijtehad. Unfortunately, the institution lost its image

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during the Umayyad period when it experienced major changes and it assumed the trappings of monarchy (Wasti, 1993, p. 288).

The Abbasids revived the institution and created a great halo of sanctity around the figure. Many non-Arab Muslim rulers yearned for their recognition by the caliph to enhance their prestige in the eyes of their subjects. Iltutmish, Muhammad Bin Tughluq, Firuz Shah and Tipu Sultan were among the Indian rulers who sought and secured such recognition. After the 'Fall of Baghdad' in 1258, Khilafat was passed into the hands of the Fatimid rulers of Egypt and finally to the Ottoman Sultans at the end of 13th Century (Wasti, 1993, p. 289). However, the case of the Mughal rulers of India was different as they did not recognize Ottoman Sultan as their spiritual head and got the Khutba read in their name in Friday prayers. After the decline of Mughals, the name of the caliph was included in Khutba, yet without great enthusiasm (Qureshi, 1962, p. 271).

Strangely enough, it was the British rule that tried to magnify Turkey in the eyes of the Indian Muslims. Firstly, the British wanted to implement their Imperial designs and secondly, they were afraid of Russian advance in Central Asia which could cause a threat to the safety of the Sub-Continent. For securing the Indian favours, the British pursued a policy of bolstering Turkey against the Russians during the 19th century. That is why in 1878, there emerged an eminent danger of Soviet Invasion of Constantinople. The British sent Indian troops to Malta and Lord Beaconsfield and pretended to wage another war against Russians for the defence of Turkey (Chirol, 1926, p. 217). All these friendly gestures and favours for Turkey took a long time to create an impression among the Indian Muslims that England was a sincere and faithful ally of Turkey. The British promoted this feeling for political reasons and tried to bind India and Turkey through developing cordial relations. But, soon after the Treaty of Berlin (1885), the Russo-British war ended that caused a reverse in pro-Turkish policies of the British. Lord Salisbury was the major figure behind this change who thought that 'in backing Turkey, England had backed the wrong horse' (Wasti, 1993, p. 290). Later on, England adopted a pro-Greek policy in Greeko-Turkish war of 1897. Meanwhile, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and other eminent Muslim scholars had judged ulterior motives behind the changes in the British policies. Their views differed on the matter of loyalty to the Turkish Caliph and the British government. Fazal-i-Hussain was of the view that in case of war between Turkey and England, ninety-five per cent of the Indian Muslims would renounce their loyalty to the Crown. Waqar ul Mulk challenged the view and argued if war broke out between Turkey and their government, the Muslims, as loyal subjects, should be on the side of the government, "but as Muhammadans, we should also be sad about it" (Wasti, 1993, p. 291).

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Anyhow, such an attitude of the British towards Turkey was gaining a severer form. England signed a treaty with Russia, a traditional enemy of Turkey, in 1907, that infuriated the Indian Muslims to a larger extent. Then, Italy attacked Turkey in 1911 and there broke a war between Italy and Turkey. Balkan states joined Italy in 1912 and deprived Turkey of most of the European possessions. These developments attracted the attention of Indian Muslims towards the protection of *Khalifah*, the successor of Holy Prophet (PBUH) or 'Chief of the Faithful' (Ali, 1946, p. 57). Therefore, the Muslims began to emit this affiliation through their political activities and writings. On the contrary, the British were trying to convince the Muslims that they would never disintegrate Turkey as shown by the speech of Mr Lloyd George in House of Commons on January 5, 1918, in which he tried to convince the Muslims about the British approbation for Turkey. But, when secret agreements of 1914-18 were published followed by the conclusion of the Treaty of Sevres in August 1920, the Muslims naturally felt that they had been deceived by the British (Smith, 1938, p. 307).

Descriptive and analytical methodology has been adopted to conclude the topic. Facts and figures have been collected from the secondary sources i.e. Published books and research articles in various research journals. All the datum has been consulted to build an opinion after analysing the opinions of some experts and authorities on the topic.

Genesis and Development of Pan-Islamism

"All the Muslims in the world are supposed to belong to one big society-call its nation or Millat or what you will" (Aziz, 1986, p. 104)

The term Pan-Islamism was coined in the nineteenth century in Western Europe that originally captured the perceived threats to the Europeans from the Muslim world. The trans-national vision and geographic concept of the term belonged to 1880s when the solidarity among the Muslims surged in response to the loss of Ottoman territories to the Balkans and Eastern Anatolia in 1878. The occupation of Tunisia by France in 1881 and of Egypt by Britain in 1882 added fuel to the fire. This expansionist policy of the Europeans stimulated the emotional and intellectual attitude of the educated class among the Muslims towards the Euro-centric world order (Hirano, 2008, p. 03) According to Ayesha Jalal, the term 'Pan-Islamism' is referred to as the idea of Islamic universalism" (Jalal, 2000, p. 66). Another source informs that Pan-Islamism is referred to a movement that aimed at uniting all the Muslims in the world based on common religion i.e. Islam as the Holy Quran and Hadith have emphasized on the concept of Muslim brotherhood and possessing good feelings for other

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Muslims. In political terms, it can be defined as the unity of Muslims under one Caliph.

Briefly speaking, the Islamic Empire began with the conquests of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) in Arabian island almost 1400 years ago. This Empire reached from Spain and North Africa to China. It was the time when all the Muslims in the world were following the teachings of Islam and they maintained the unity under the banner of 'Muslim brotherhood'. This political unity among the Muslims could be seen until the fall of the *Umayyad* rule in 132 A. H (Abdul Rauf, 2007, p. 21). The *Abbasids* could not follow the same footings that caused a decline of Muslim power and the West dominated. As far as India is concerned, early Muslim invaders and rulers including Muhammad Bin Qasim. Mahmud of Ghazna, Muhammad Ghouri and Sultans of Delhi built their petty empires with limited influence which was not enough to catch the support of the Muslims all around the world. Though, all these had a deep affiliation with the Khalifa but could not practise its true spirit. Ottoman Empire was founded in 1299 and its head, Khalifa, began to affect the polity of the Sub-Continent but not in satisfactory terms. However, during the Mughal rule, the Indian Muslims ignored the Ottoman Empire's claim to leadership of the Islamic community. Tipu Sultan (1750-1799) was the first Indian ruler who made many attempts to gain recognition from the Mughals and even turned to the Sultan of Turkey to establish a legal right to his throne (Wynbrandt, 2009, p. 142).

The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed the come on the fore the concept of Pan-Islamism in Turkey when European colonial powers were advancing towards Muslim lands. In the same period, Europe was experiencing the rise of certain movements like Pan-Slavism and Pan-Germanism having extra-territorial sympathies for the adherents. These movements influenced the thinkers and policy-makers in Turkey who started paying attention in organizing the Muslims of the world to broadening the base of support for Turkey. Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1842-1918) was the first Turkish to put the idea of Pan-Islamism into practice after assuring the support of the Turkish intellectuals later known as "Young Ottomans". Namik Kemal (1840-1888) was prominent among them because of his ideology of patriotism with Islamist nationalism as its base (Abdul Rauf, 2007, p. 22).

Jamal-u-Din Afghani (d. 1897), an advocate of Muslim unity, a dedicated and unselfish politician and 'leader of the East', was contemporary of these developments in Europe and the Muslim bloc. He was fighting with a power of his pen to emancipate the Muslims from European yoke. Afghani preached logical Islam and advised the Muslims not to divide science into 'Muslim science' and 'Western science'. The most distinguished idea of Afghani was his dedication to

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pan-Islamic civilization. He was of the view that by preaching unity among the Muslims, they could make progress and regain vanished glory of the past. His political plan of pan-Islamism aimed at enabling the Muslims to fight against the Western domination and to equip them with military supremacy through science and technology (Tariq, 2011, p. 350). Arguably, his pan-Islamic aim was political rather a religious one. Thoroughly, the nature of the plan and its implementation can be elaborated in these words.

"When he talked of Muslims unity, he did not mean only co-operation of religious or political leaders; he meant the solidarity of the Ummah, the sense of responsibility which each member of it should have towards the others and the whole, the desire to live together in the community and work together for its welfare. Solidarity (Asabiyah) as the force, which held society together, and without it would dissolve. Like all human attributes, it could be perverted; it was not a law unto itself, it is subject to the principle of moderation or justice, the organizing principle of human societies. Solidarity, which did not recognize this principle and was not willing to do justice turned into fanaticism" (Tariq, 2011, p. 350).

Afghani's notion of pan-Islamism influenced many Muslims of various ranks in the whole Islamic world. It left everlasting effects on the political activities of the Indian Muslims who stood firm against their rulers in defence of *Khilafah* in Turkey. For that sacred mission, they launched a full-fledged movement which is known as the Khilafat Movement in the history of Indo-Pak subcontinent.

Khilafat Movement and the Indian Muslims

History reveals that India had never been controlled politically by Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo or the Porte rather by the Slaves, Tughlaqs, Gauris, Lodhis, Sayyids, Mughals and Suris. Except for Lodhis and Khaljis all were Turks in their ethnic origin (Qureshi, 1999, p. 14). Some famous Indian rulers like Mahmud of Ghazna, Iltutmish and Muhammad Bin Tughlaq obtained an investiture from the Caliph to legitimise their rule in the eyes of their subjects. Some found themselves privileged ones in carving the name of Caliph with their names on the coins. No ruler in India claimed to be a Caliph except Jalal-u-Din Muhammad Akbar, but he failed to get popularity among the Muslims as a Khalifa (Abdul Rauf, 2007, p. 23). Later Mughals (1707-1857) could not pay proper attention towards the institution due to their troubled polity.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century and early quarter of the twentieth century, the Ottoman Empire had been viewed as a 'veritable centre' of the Muslim world. It was considered as a symbol of unity among the Muslims of the world and any threat to it was a threat to Islam itself. Many Muslim leaders of this duration had been avid supporters of the Empire. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-

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1898) was one of them who got influenced by the Ottoman Caliphate and supported it until the British and Turks found themselves on the opposite sides. Shibli Noumani (1857-1914) received a medal of honour from the Ottoman government in the early 1890s in the course of his travels through Istanbul and Egypt. In addition to that, it was due to Shibli's initiative that the Syrian Pan-Islamist Muhammad Rashid Rida was invited to preside the annual session of Nadwat -ul-Ulema in 1912 (Zaman, 2018, p. 30). After the death of Shibli in 1914, new leaders were on the scene. Abul Kalam Azad is the prominent one in this list who was a traditionally educated religious scholar and a 'firebrand' Urdu journalist. At the end of the First World War, he played a pivotal role in mobilizing the Muslim sentiment and preaching that the defence of the Ottoman Empire was a religious obligation upon all the Muslims. His magnificent work *The Problem of Caliphate*, published in 1920, had castigated the British to allow freedom to their Muslim subjects in small matters like prayer and fasting while attacking the institution of Khilafat which stood at the very foundation of their religion (Zaman, 2018, p. 30).

Similarly, Mahmud-ul-Hassan was the first student of Darul Uloom Deoband and had gained popularity in his early age even before he became publicly associated with the Pan-Islamic causes. He was also given the title of Shaykh-ul-Hind (Shaykh of India) by the Central Khilafat Committee. A large number of people used to follow him for benefiting themselves from his guidance in religious matters. His aura of piety was such that during a voyage from India to Saudi Arabia 600 of the 750 or so, people became his disciples *en route*. By far the most prominent leader of the Khilafat Movement was a journalist Muhammad Ali Johar who was a graduate from Aligarh Muslim University and had subsequently obtained a BA from Oxford. He had got the benefit of the presence of Shibli at Aligarh and later would become a disciple of Abdul Bari. He belonged to early modernists and his education reflected the strategy of Sir Syed to exclude the study of Islam form the curriculum of Aligarh. But, under the British internment, he had decided to discover the Quran and this discovery led him to match with the traditionally educated religious scholars on the matter of the defence of the Ottoman Empire (Zaman, 2018, p. 31). The last generation of British rule experienced two mass political movements in South Asia i. e. Muslim League and Khilafat Movement. The former, influenced by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, was founded in 1906, defended the Muslim interests and became a mass movement in the late 1940s. The latter began in 1919 and ended in 1924. It was initiated on the tradition of Shah Waliullah being both explicitly religious and much more radical (Lieven, 2012, p. 48). During the First World War, British Prime Minister Lloyd George assured the Indian Muslims that Turkey would not be deprived of the

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territories in Asia Minor and Thrace, where the Turkish were in majority. But the British backed out and Thrace was given to Greece and the Asian portions of the Turkish Empire were occupied by British and its ally France as mandated territories. Additionally, a High Commission was appointed to dispose of the Turkish *Khalifa* of all his powers (Khan, 2009, p. 14).

These British steps infuriated the Indian Muslims, who, accompanied by the popular political figures from the Congress like M. K. Gandhi and formed All India Khilafat Committee in July 1919. First Khilafat Conference was held in Delhi in November 1919 to discuss the issues of Khilafat and some important decisions were made too. Participants of the Khilafat Movement rejected the victory celebration of the British after the war. In this way, they could show displeasure on the state of affairs and could impressively express their point of view. They decided to boycott British goods and not to cooperate with the Government. Anyway, the second Khilafat Conference was held in December 1919 which was attended by Molana Muhammad Ali Johar and Shoukat Ali after being released from prison. Ali brothers, already charged with the violation of the British rules, did not feel any hesitation to become a part of the movement. They played an integral role to put the demands in front of the British concerning the protection of the Ottoman Empire (Farhatullah, 2015, p. 06). The demands of the Khilafat committee were as under:

(1) "The Turkish Empire should not be dismembered.
(2) The institution of Caliphate must be retained.
(3) The Holy places should remain in the custody of the Turkish Government.
(4) Jazirat-ul-Arab, including Mesopotamia, Arabia, Syria and Palestine with the Holy places situated therein, must always remain under the direct suzerainty of the Khilafat" (Farhatullah, 2015, p. 07).

The Sultan of Turkey was head of the Ottoman Empire as well as *Khalifa* of the Muslim Community in the world. Therefore, all the European designs, to deprive Turkey of its territories, were resented by the Muslims in India that gave birth to what came to be called the Khilafat Movement. It was purely based on religion as the Muslim concerns were connected with the Islamic sentiments only (Aziz, 1986, p. 109). These sentiments were the product of the fact that the European powers were fastening upon the Muslim states in North Africa and the Middle East. The Soviet advance in *Turkistan*, French manipulation of Muslim states in North Africa, Britain's intervention in Persian and the Afghan affairs and Italian occupation of Tripoli were viewed by the Muslims as a part of a deliberate plan to destroy Islam in the world. Britain's ulterior motives became clearer during Turco-Italian conflict and Balkan Wars (as it did not come to the

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rescue of Turkey). It shocked the Muslims in India as it was totally against their expectations (Aziz, 1986, p. 109).

It is worth mentioning that Gandhi joined hands with the Indian Muslims during the episode of Khilafat movement to assault the injustice with Muslim community. Gandhi seized an opportunity and encouraged both the Hindus and the Muslims to take collective action against the British. Leaders of the Movement and the Congress issued a joint statement in 1920 in which they had decided to launch the Non-Cooperation Movement under the leadership of Gandhi. It aimed at boycotting of British goods, schools and institutions that were not in favour of the Muslims at all. Gandhi emerged as an Indian nationalist for bringing the Muslims and the Hindus together in the independence movement (Wynbrandt, 2009, p. 143). Under these circumstances, the Muslims forgot their personal and sectarian differences and claimed credit for strengthening the grass-root effort i.e. *Khilafat* Movement. All the Bralvis and Deobandis were on the same page, yet *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* (JUH) became more popular with its non-violent approach resonated with the ideals of Gandhi and the Congress that gave birth to a Hindu-Muslim alliance against the British imperialism (Abbas, 2014, p. 67).

At its height in 1920, the *Khilafat* movement gave birth to another movement of mass migration known as the Hijrat movement where the leaders of the Khilafat movement Muhammad Ali Jauhar and Shaukat Ali and other *Ulema* declared India Dar-ul-Harb (place of war) not safe for Islam and preferred to migrate to an independent country Afghanistan that was considered as a safe abode for Muslims of India. Muhammad Ali Jauhar and Shaukat Ali in a memorandum sent to the Viceroy of India, Lord Chelmsford expressed their views that "When a land is not safe for Islam a Muslim has only two alternatives *Jehad* or *Hijrat*…" (Ali, 1982, p. 726-27). Almost thirty thousand Indian Muslims decided to leave for Afghanistan in response to the treatment meted out to Caliph by the British Empire, no doubt, facing hardships en route. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was the president of Hijrat Committee in NWFP and migrated to Afghanistan but soon realised as many others after migration that British imperialism could only be defeated while remaining in India. (Ali, 1982, p. 735). The *Hijrat* Movement failed as Afghanistan was burdened with the overflow of Muhajirin and was unable to provide for them despite the sincere efforts and help. The movement was triggered by the emotional affinity of the Indian Muslims with the Khilafat and Islam aroused by the leaders to protect the institution.

It was the first time when a predominantly religious issue was introduced into Indian politics. But, interestingly, the Western-educated Muslim leaders like Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Ali Jinnah kept themselves aloof from the movement though they were

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deeply impressed with the regime of Kamal Ataturk of Turkey (Cohen, 2005, p. 26). But they were afraid of the fact that the religious focus could divide the Muslims and the Hindus. Jinnah favoured and recommended for secular political leadership, tagged the movement as unconstitutional and resigned from the Congress Party in protest (Wynbrandt, 2009, p. 143). Jinnah's views proved right when Ghandi left the Muslims right in the middle. After the death of three civilians and twenty-two policemen in the episode of Chora Chori in 1922, Ghandi halted the Non-cooperation Movement which, for the time being. earned nothing for the Muslims but distrust on the Hindus and disappointment.

Impact of the Movement

Khilafat Movement left a long-term impact on the religious and political life of the Muslims in India. It paved the way for *Ulema* to enter politics. Soon after World War I, particularly, *Deobandi Ulema* established *Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Hind* (JUH) in 1920 that espoused Pan-Islamic sentiments and evolved during the activist phase in the movement. In the words of K. K. Aziz:

"Nothing illustrates the play of religious feeling in politics better than the short-lived but fervent Indian Khilafat Movement" (Aziz, 1986, p. 108).

Notably, while sharing this platform with Indian National Congress (INC), these *Ulema* were advocating the independence for India on the one hand and were subscribing to a pan-Islamic identity on the other. Some of them formed parties like Ahl-i-Hadith and Tabligh and tried to energize marginal Muslims to a more rigorous version of Islam but pretended to avoid their involvement in the political affairs of the Sub-Continent (Malik, 2008, p. 119). By the same token, the Muslims learnt an important lesson that non-Muslims can never be the well-wishers of the Muslims.

Accordingly, the movement left a topic for Indian Muslim scholars to explore the concept and meaning of Pan-Islamism. They were curious to know about their history of glory when they had integrated themselves based on Muslim brotherhood, preached by Holy Quran and Sunnah. Scholars like Molana Abul Kalam Azad, conducted researches on the topic primarily relying on Quran and Sunnah. His work 'Masla-i-Khilafat wa Jazirat al-Arab' published in 1920, interpreted unity of the Muslims with reference to the cause of Khilafat in Turkey in particular and territorial solidarity of the Muslims in general. He was of the opinion that pan-Islamism was not a new phenomenon to the Muslim society yet it needed to be discovered and connected its links with the early days of Islam. He tried to trace the concept of pan-Islamism in a way that:

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"If this was 'Pan-Islamism', then its origins had to be traced to the beginnings of Islam and the Quranic revelation itself" (Jalal, 2000, p. 194).

From the Khilafat Movement episode, the Muslims had learnt important political lessons through mass mobilisation of the Muslims and working alongside Hindus in alliance for a chiefly Muslim cause. The Khilafat Movement, although did not succeed in its stated goal of protecting the institution of Khilafat and the Ottoman Empire from dismemberment but gave the Indian Muslims a toolbox of future politics in dealing with the British Empire and the ways to pressurise her to get maximum rights for the Muslims. The Movement also opened up a debate about history that enabled them to be in touch with the trends of their ancestors to maintain the unity. Last but not the least, through Khilafat Movement, the Muslims in India had carved out an exclusive identity for themselves. Their inclination towards the Caliph in Turkey had developed new and individual ways to balance their lives with the British sovereigns and the Caliph was their spiritual referent in Istanbul. In this way, they learnt balancing their territorial nationalism with universalism (Alvi, 2015, p. 219). It led them to demand a separate homeland and they achieved it in August 1947 where they could feel no dangers to their identity.

Conclusion

Khilafat Movement was such an occurrence that gathered the Muslims in India for protecting the Khilafat of Turkey. Educated Muslims propagated the notion of Pan-Islamism and Muslim brotherhood encouraged the community to stand with Turkey against the British imperialism. In its early days, the movement experienced the Hindu-Muslim unity to put the demands in front of the British authorities to withdraw from their strategies to dismember Turkey. The protests were organized against the government to show that the Indians were with the Ottomans. In short, the movement directed the Muslim attention towards the security of their spiritual head without considering it as the Turkish problem only rather supposing it as a genuine cause of Muslim *Ummah*. This thinking fostered a sense of world community among the Muslims in general and India in particular. Later on, the Indian Muslims followed the same patterns of Islamic brotherhood and unity in carving a separate land of their own in 1947.

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